

CONGRESSMAN

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NORTHROP GRUMMAN/EADS WIN AIR FORCE TANKER CONTRACT TANKERS TO BE BUILT IN MOBILE



As we all know, last month the Air Force awarded the Northrop Grumman/EADS team the contract to build 179 aerial refueling tankers — tankers that will be assembled right here in Mobile.

Papers throughout the state and around the nation have praised the Air Force for choosing the best plane for the warfighter.

The day following the announcement, the *Press-Register* said, “The best tanker won.” The *Orlando Sentinel* editorialized, “Congressional critics of Northrop Air Force contract are off base.” The *Montgomery Advertiser* wrote, “The decision should be based on what provides the best equipment for U.S. servicemen and women at a fair price.”

However, for as many editorial boards that came out in support of the decision, there have been some especially loud voices that have argued the Northrop Grumman KC-45A will somehow be an un-American plane.

In response to these claims, a *New*



I spoke with reporters at a Northrop Grumman press conference in Mobile following the Air Force's decision to award the team the contract to build the KC-45A tanker.

York Times editorial stated, “For Congress to reverse the decision on ‘Buy America’ grounds would be bad for taxpayers: requiring them to pay for aircraft that provide less value for the money.”

Prior to the award announcement, those in support of Boeing’s proposal sang the praises of a fair and transparent process — that is until Northrop

Grumman was awarded the tanker contract.

On October 31, 2007, Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) said, “I’m proud that the process for selecting a company to supply these tankers has been a truly open one.”

In April of last year, Mark McGraw, vice president of Boeing Tanker Program said, “I have extreme confidence that the Air Force is going to continue — because they have been doing a great job so far — a fair and open competition, and so I would expect that they will announce a winner, and hopefully the program can just move forward.”

While I am disappointed Boeing chose to protest this contract and delay the tanker even more, we must let the process run its course. The current fleet of aircraft is almost 50 years old and in desperate need of replacement — not for our sake but for the sake of the warfighter and their families.

Local elected officials visit Washington

Each spring, the National League of Cities (NLC) holds its annual meeting in Washington, D.C. This organization, founded in 1924 as a means of giving municipalities a greater voice in national affairs, is a working partnership of 49 state municipal leagues, representing over 18,000 communities, towns, and cities from all fifty states.

At this year's conference, mayors, city council representatives, and community officials from throughout Alabama's First District made the trip to Washington to visit with colleagues from across the nation.

Through several days of committee meetings, training sessions, and events with national political leaders, the members of the NLC have the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of developing trends in local government and share information on successes in local economic and community development.

Just as importantly, the representatives from Alabama took the opportunity to meet with the members of Alabama's congressional delegation to highlight their individual community priorities and — more significantly — to continue advancing plans that are underway for regional growth throughout southwest Alabama.

I was privileged to have the opportunity to meet with the men and women who have been elected to represent each of you on the local level and to hear the goals they have developed for ensuring their cities and towns are both forward-thinking and forward-moving.

Rest assured, the men and women representing you in the city halls of south Alabama — whether first-term city clerks or five-term mayors — are working hard to make south Alabama a better place to live and work.



Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to visit with Theodore High School students, who were in Washington, D.C. as part of the Close-Up program.



Ben Berson of Mobile served in my Washington, D.C. office as an intern for the last few months. A graduate of the University of Alabama, he recently went to work for Jones Walker law firm in Washington, D.C. Ben was an outstanding intern, and he will certainly be missed.

From the mailbox...

*Dear Congressman Bonner,
I emailed you previously about my problem and delay in obtaining a Social Security Disability hearing.*

I wanted to thank you so very much for your help regarding my situation. As you know, I was approved "fully favorable" with a review in 12 months. Unfortunately, I will be in the same condition, possibly worse in 12 months; however, it made a big difference, I think, that you showed interest in my case, and I won.

The judge was very nice, and I felt he really listened to me. I know I'm young, only 48, but my condition makes me feel like I'm much older. I have gone through a lot lately, bankruptcy, the loss of my mother, and the loss of my only child at the age of 25.

I wanted to thank you. I got a pretty good sized back pay, which will let me pay some very late bills and keep my home out of foreclosure.

You are a good man, and I appreciate you and your staff's help with my situation.

Again, thank you so very much, Mr. Bonner; you are my hero.

Sincerely,

A grateful resident of south Alabama



Annual Workshop for High School Leaders

In March, I held my annual Workshop for High School Leaders on the campus of the University of South Alabama.

A tradition in the First Congressional District for over twenty years, the workshop is a highly successful way of encouraging the leaders of tomorrow to take an interest in the events shaping the world around them.

We had an overwhelming response from several high schools throughout the First District. High school government and journalism students had the opportunity to question representatives from all levels of state and federal government, as well as members of the Gulf Coast broadcast and print media.

I would like to sincerely thank all those who attended, especially, Gordon Moulton, president of the University of South Alabama, Baldwin County schools Superintendent Dr. Faron Hollinger, Mobile County schools Superintendent Dr. Roy Nichols, Bob Grip of WALA-TV, Linda Swann with the Alabama Development Office, Claudia Zimmerman with the Mobile Chamber of Commerce, Ed Castille with the Alabama Industrial Development Training, Jennifer Abney of WKR-



Students from Bayside Academy joined high school students from across Alabama's First District at my Annual Workshop for High School Leaders where we had the opportunity to discuss the federal legislative process.

TV, Rob Holbert of Lagniappe, Varion Walton of NBC 15, and Kaija Wilkinson with the Press-Register.

This seminar is part of our ongoing commitment to be easily accessible to all my constituents, while at the same time providing an educational backdrop for the leaders of tomorrow.

REMEMBERING FORMER ALABAMA CONGRESSMAN BILL DICKINSON

I was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of my good friend, former Alabama Congressman Bill Dickinson late last month. Our nation lost a wonderful friend and an individual who made countless contributions toward the betterment of our nation.

Bill served as ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, and from this position, he was a steadfast supporter of increased military funding and halting the spread of communism throughout the world. He was also a fierce protector of military bases vital to Alabama's economy.

A lifelong Democrat, Bill changed parties in 1964 and ran as a Republican to the U.S. House of Representatives for Alabama's Second District. In so doing, he was part of the Barry Goldwater sweep in Alabama that propelled five Republican congressional candidates to victory in what had previously been solid Democratic country.

Bill Dickinson went on to serve 13 consecutive terms in Congress. The enormous impact of this dedicated public servant will be felt throughout our state for generations to come.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to his wife, Barbara; their four children; and their five grandchildren at this difficult time.



Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to visit with Spring Hill College broadcast journalism students who are studying under Bob Grip of Fox 10. As a journalism major myself at the University of Alabama, I discussed my experiences in the field and took questions from the students.